

**Town of Belmont
Capital Budget Committee
Belmont Town Hall, Selectmen's Meeting Room
Thursday Evening, February 5, 2009, 6:00 p.m.**

Mrs. Brusch called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m. Members of the Committee present at the time of the call to order were: M. Patricia Brusch, Mark F. Clark, John Conte and Anne Marie Mahoney. Also present were Thomas Younger, Town Administrator; Barbara Hagg, Town Accountant and staff liaison to the Capital Budget Committee; and representatives of the Police Department. Ann Rittenburg joined the meeting shortly after the Police Department presentation began. Daniel Leclerc joined the meeting during the School Department presentation. Others, identified below, joined the meeting to make presentations to the Committee.

The Committee had the following material before it:

1. Drafts of minutes of meetings 1/8/09 and 1/14/09.

At the commencement of the Police Department presentation, Chief Richard J. McLaughlin made available additional copies of the Department's requests that had been made available previously.

Police Department

The Police Department was represented by the Chief, Richard J. McLaughlin and the Assistant Chief, Richard J. Lane. Chief McLaughlin began by offering everyone another copy of his memo concerning Capital Budget items dated November 26, 2008. Mrs. Brusch then reviewed previously appropriated capital sums to determine whether any balances were ready for reversions and re-appropriation. There were none. Particular attention was focused on the project to install a generator at the site of the antenna. That project is not yet complete.

Chief McLaughlin next turned to the Departments' requests for Capital FY2010. He explained that the Department wishes to purchase an upgrade for the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and the computer records management systems for all calls (QED). These systems are used for bookings, traffic control, dispatch, court documentation, and court scheduling. The system maintains records of court findings and allows searches. The Department already has this system but the requested capital expenditure is to obtain the most current operating systems and components. The current system is on a UNIX server but the new system would be a Windows-based system. Mrs. Brusch inquired why this request had not been processed through the Town's Information Technology Department. Chief McLaughlin explained that this software is specific to the Police Department and the Department has had the systems since 1990. Its requests have never gone through the Town's Information Technology Department in the past. Mrs. Brusch explained the policy and scope of responsibility of the Capital Budget Committee, and

pointed out that upgrades of existing software are not within the ambit of this Committee. Mrs. Brusch warned, however, that capital expenditures like software applications should not be allowed to become “orphans.” Mr. Clark indicated that he would be interested in David Petto’s comments regarding the proposed upgrade.

Chief McLaughlin next turned to the Department’s requests for the Fiscal Years 2011 through 2015. Discussion focused particularly on the van requested for FY 2011 and the mapping system requested for 2012. Mrs. Brusch indicated that the mapping request should definitely be processed through the Town’s Information Technology Department. Mrs. Brusch also explained that the Capital Budget Community is trying to encourage the Town to establish a vehicle pool. Further discussion indicated that this particular van might be more appropriate for location at the Police Department, rather than in a vehicle pool site. Chief McLaughlin explained that this van is used to transport (on a moment’s notice) the Belmont contribution to the Northeast Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC), of which Belmont is a member. NEMLEC provides emergency response for its members. The emergency response teams provided by Belmont are transported in this van, along with their equipment (officers respond with full gear in large, three-foot bags.) If needed, the NEMLEC over-all response can be as high as 150 officers. Special services available through NEMLEC include a SWAT team, crime scene vehicles, school assessment response, bomb sniffing dogs, cybercrime and child pornography investigation, and hand writing experts. Although the mileage on the current van is relatively low (34,000 miles), the vehicle is beginning to rust and the trade-in value would be higher at this point. Mr. Younger inquired whether outside storage is one of the factors in the rusting. Chief McLaughlin responded that it is. Despite the importance of the availability of the van for the Belmont Department’s participation in the NEMLEC system, Chief McLaughlin reported that other town departments have used the van on occasion in the past.

Library Department

The Library Department was represented by Maureen Connors, Library Director and three members of the Library Trustees: Mary Keenan, Elaine Alligood, and Heli Thomford (Vice-Chairperson of the Trustees). The Library Department’s major request is for the new main library building. The state would make available \$3.5 million in grant toward the expense of a new library building but the site of such a building is yet to be resolved. Although this project is beyond the scope of the current allocation for a FY 2010 capital budget, the Committee explored in a general discussion some of the issues involved in finding a site for a new library building, including a future meeting between the Library and the School Department to work out use of the so-called Penney land (roughly the softball field). (The application that the School Department made for assistance from the state with regard to the expense of High School renovations included Claybrook Pond and the Penney land to meet the acreage requirements of such an application.) One of suggestions that is being considered if land adjacent to the High School site is suitable for a new library is inclusion in the basement of such a new building the restrooms to take the place of the White Field House. Mrs. Brusch pointed

out that currently the new plumbing code takes the position that the number of people that can stand in the stadium is relevant for determining the size of the needed restrooms. Such a calculation would result in unfeasibly large restrooms. The issue of how to determine the size of required restrooms is currently being reviewed at the state level.

The discussion then turned to the requests for walkway and sidewalk repairs, and parking lot curbing being made on behalf of the Library for FY 2010. Mrs. Brusch suggested that the Library use state library grant money for these purposes. That suggestion brought a strong response from Mrs. Keenan who stated that grant moneys will be needed for a feasibility study for the new building. She believes that there is so much foot traffic in connection with the use of the library that failure to repair the sidewalk is a safety issue. Mr. Clark inquired whether, if the main library building is eventually used as a police headquarters, will the requested sidewalks and curbs be used or abandoned. Mrs. Brusch responded that they would be abandoned. Mr. Clark observed that this situation then militates in favor of the asphalt option for the curbing. Mrs. Brusch observed that both of these requests could easily fall into the category of "orphans," that is, capital items that are too small or routine to be included in the purview of this Committee.

School Department

The School Department represented by Dr. Gerald Missal, Director of Finance; Robert Martin, Supervisor of Maintenance and Steve Mazzola, Director of (the School Department's) Technology Department. The first item was a review of the former capital projects to determine what balances might be reverted for reappropriation. The amounts appropriated for replacement of High School translucent panels are not ready for reversion. Some work will be done this summer and another bid was just completed. Mrs. Brusch asked Mr. Martin to exhaust older accounts before spending new monies. The Winbrook oil burner project is complete and \$2,300 may be reverted. The fiber redundancy project is not completed. The last component in that project will be a cable beneath the railroad tracks. The network design is now being completed with the participation of David Petto and is expected to be entering the approval process within the next two weeks. The Chenery Middle School telephone project is not yet complete. The only outstanding item is to determine if the new 'phones are on the back-up power supply. The data integration project is still being worked on. The tennis court project can be closed and the balance (\$516) returned. Only eight courts will be used. The Burbank painting is complete and \$22,000 can be returned. The foreign language laboratory is in the fundraising stage now. The Town's appropriation will pay for the infrastructure for that project. The architectural meeting will be held for the project within the next few weeks.

Dr. Missal made clear that he had assumed that the so-called envelope project would be conducted like the roof project had been conducted; that is, a certain amount would be appropriated each year in order to complete part of the recommendations that resulted from the basic survey of conditions. Mr. Mazzola began by explaining his request for a computer upgrade. He had completed a network assessment that shows that

within the schools certain elements of the existing network need to be redesigned and expanded to accommodate new services. Mr. Mazzola indicated that the upgrade would involve “tying” the computers directly back to computer closets rather than to intermediate devices that increase the chances of failure. Of the funds requested, approximately 50% would be spent at the Chenery Middle School; 25% would be spent at the High School and 25% on the rest of schools. In response to a question from Mrs. Mahoney, Mr. Mazzola indicated that the cabling component of the proposed project would last about 20 years or more and the equipment would, on average, last 5 to 7 years. Dr. Missal remarked upon the Committee policy to fund the infrastructure for technology but not the computers themselves. Mrs. Brusch agreed with Dr. Missal’s observation. Mrs. Mahoney stated that 5 to 7 years lifespan is too short for the Capital Budget Committee. Mr. Clark expressed the opinion that the Town needs to get through the economic downturn and preserve the skin and envelope of buildings and should not devote all of its resources to operating needs. He stated that in his opinion the Town will not be able to do what everyone wishes to do. He wanted to know how this proposal fits into his idea of asset preservation. Dr. Missal asked Mr. Mazzola what the downside of not funding this upgrade would be. Mr. Mazzola responded that network failures could be handled internally. The network would not go down; it would just not be what the Technology Department would like it to be. Information technology is not in an emergency situation.

The Committee turned to the remainder of the School Department requests the first of which is for a security system for the elementary schools. This is already partially funded and Applied Risk Management has speced out all the needed equipment. Sufficient funds are available for the Butler and Burbank School. The purchases would be made from that state authorized bid list. The Wellington School would not be done if a debt exclusion to build a new school were to pass; the security project would proceed on the existing Wellington only if a debt exclusion fails. Mr. Younger inquired if there would be a savings if all buildings were done simultaneously. Dr. Missal stated that the consultant did not feel that any such savings were available. In the absence of Ms. Fallon, Mrs. Brusch asked a question that Ms. Fallon had asked be answered. Why are the High School and the Chenery Middle School not the Department’s first priority since they were rated as a higher risk assessment than the other schools by the consultant.

Dr. Missal replied that his priority is to protect children and he feels that high school kids can take care of themselves better whereas the younger children cannot. Mr. Martin observed that most threats at the High School come from within rather than from without, making door security a moot point. Mr. Younger has been asked to reconstitute the security committee to do a report for the current process which was not part of its original recommendation. Dr. Missal summarized the program that is being proposed. Once all staff and children are within a building, there would be a camera and a buzzer to secure each entrance. The existing problem is that the principal’s offices in the existing schools are not easily accessible to the outside doors. Interior cameras in corridors would track people from the entrances to ensure the safety of children. There would also be outside cameras for security. The School Department currently sponsors a identification tag which all staff members wear and there is a practice on the part of all staff members

to ask unidentified people if they can be helped. Dr. Missal pointed out that he wears his own staff identification card when visiting schools.

The Committee next turned to the Department's second priority, which is replacements of the univents at the High School. These units are in the exterior classroom walls. The existing units are original to the building. The replacements are consistent with the existing system and would not have to be replaced again during High School renovation. The full cost is \$1.2 million but the Department is proposing that replacement of units be phased at the rate of \$200,000 per year. Mrs. Brusch said that this would be one of the economic stimulus bill projects should they be funded. The units could be assembled offsite and installed over a series of summers, 12 units at a time.

The Chenery Middle School energy management system (the Department's next request) was rejected as part of the earlier ESCO project because the pay-back period would be too long. Since that project, there has been an improvement in the available technology. It is now felt that the system can be improved satisfactorily. The basic problem is that heating units are found to be operating when they need not be operating. The proposed project would provide better control even though it is not a complete replacement. Current technology allows for wiring from unit to unit rather than wiring each unit back to the controlling computer. This was another item that was included in Belmont's economic stimulus proposal.

The burner and boiler replacement proposal for the Butler School would replace a 1964 oil-fired boiler that is currently in fair condition as part of an on-going program to change the heating system to a gas system and get rid of the oil tank that is currently in the ground. There may be a booster needed for gas service but the gas company is offering to do this work and provide a \$30,000 rebate for the conversion. Mrs. Brush observed that the proposal for replacement of school carpeting at Burbank is not within the purview of the Capital Budget Committee and should be considered among the "orphan" items.

The proposal regarding the athletic complex and the White Field House resulted in a general discussion of the north side of Concord Avenue. Mrs. Brusch suggested to Dr. Missal that a resolution must first be made of the issue of how many or how large the restroom facilities should be and how the capacity of the grandstand should be calculated for application of the plumbing code. Mr. Clark again expressed the view that the Town needs a comprehensive approach to the development of the north side of Concord Avenue.

With regard to the replacement of the maintenance shop now located partly at the Wellington school, partly within the former woodshop at the High School, Dr. Missal made it clear that the School Department does not wish to increase the cost of the Wellington project by adding this replacement to that project. A new maintenance facility could be bonded over five years and could be combined with work at the Department of Public Works facility.

The School Department's entire building envelope cost estimate is \$1.4 million. Dr. Missal again pointed out that he would want a fixed amount devoted each year to this project so that some elements of the envelope study could be addressed each year. Mr. Younger inquired whether there would be a cost savings if groupings of the subprojects identified in the envelope study were undertaken all at once. Mr. Martin replied that each subproject is completely different unless the Department were, for instance, to undertake to do something like hardware for all schools at one time. Mrs. Brusch observed that there are subprojects on the list that the Capital Budget Committee does not consider capital items within its definition and not all the items are of equal priority. Door hardware and the High School driveway are not truly envelope. Dr. Missal observed that the High School driveway could be switched over to the building and grounds capital budget. One way or the other the driveway needs to be addressed. Mr. Clark believes getting new hardware is not about preserving a capital asset during these difficult economic times whereas paving the roadway could be considered preservative. Dr. Missal pointed out that the envelope is all items on the building exterior, including panic hardware. The security of building does contribute to the preservation of the building and doors that close dependably is part of that security. Mrs. Brusch stated that she feels that this hardware is an operating expense or at least not within the purview of this Committee.

Dr. Missal raised the issue whether the Town's effort to bring its budget within its available funds was falling inappropriately on the School Department budget. In response, Mrs. Brusch pointed out that the School Department and the other town departments do not have fixed percentages of the amount allocated to the capital budget. Mrs. Mahoney pointed out that until the roof project started, the School Department had funded all of its own capital items from its own allocation. The capital budget allocation had never been increased to cover the School Department capital needs when the School Department was included in the Capital Budget Committee process. In effect, this inclusion of school needs for capital budget items has cut the availability of capital funds for the other town departments.

General Discussion

Following the presentation from the School Department, the Committee discussed a number of items, including schedule. This discussion took place before and after the pending draft minutes were acted upon. No further meetings are scheduled for this Committee in February. A capital budget for FY 2010 may depend on an override. There may be a budget delay. The meetings scheduled for March 5th and 12th are of little use. At least two members will be absent one of those dates and one member will absent on the other. Mrs. Brusch and Mrs. Mahoney expressed the view that pressing requests could be accommodated within the Committee's current allocation.

Mr. Leclerc asked about the status of a sidewalk plow. Mrs. Brusch replied that the Town is currently doing about 28 miles of sidewalk but there are only two miles around municipal buildings. If the Town requests townspeople to shovel their own walks, it will not be worth getting a machine to do around municipal buildings only. Mr.

Leclerc feels that the Concord Avenue sidewalk adjacent to municipal land is not being done as well as it could be.

Mrs. Brusch asked if Mr. Younger could find funds within the pavement management program to address the needs of the Library and the High School driveway. By consensus, the meeting for March 5 and 12 were cancelled. Mrs. Brusch will request that Glen Clancy, Director of the Community Development Department, attend a meeting on March 26. Messrs. Clark and Leclerc briefly discussed curbing. Mrs. Brusch suggested that Mr. Clark take his questions up directly with Mr. Clancy concerning curbing because Mr. Clancy had already spoken to the Committee about curbing at a meeting at which Mr. Clark was not present.

The Committee discussed whether the land on which the former Payson Park School had been situated had ever been transferred from the School Department to the Town generally. Mr. Younger reported that he could find no transfer mentioned in Town Reports between 1975 and 1979 but there was a reference to an appropriation for a playground on that site in 1979. Mrs. Brusch opined that any transfer of land would have taken place in the mid-1980's. Mr. Conte feels that Treasurer Hanson (who died in 1989) would have been involved in this). Mrs. Mahoney suggested that checking School Committee votes on index cards would be the fastest way to research this issue.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meetings

Meetings of 1/8/09 and 1/14/09

Mrs. Brusch called for action on pending minutes. Mr. Clark pointed out that copies of drafts of minutes of 1/8/09 and 1/14/09 were available and that he had made corrections in the draft minutes of 1/8/09 subsequent to the draft that had been circulated previously to the Committee. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the meetings of 1/8/09 and 1/14/09 were approved as presented.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at about 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark F. Clark